United Nations A/52/427

General Assembly

Distr.: General
6 October 1997
English
Original: Arabic/English/
French/Russian

Fifty-second session
Agenda item 76

Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

Report of the Secretary-General

Contents

		Page
I.	Introduction	2
II.	Replies received from Governments	2
	Algeria	2
	Jordan	3
	Lebanon	3
	Malta	4
	Russian Federation	8

97-26510 (E) 131097 141097 151097

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 51/50 of 8 January 1996, the General Assembly encouraged all States of the Mediterranean region to favour the necessary conditions for strengthening the confidence-building measures among them, by promoting genuine openness and transparency on all military matters and participation, *inter alia*, in the United Nation system for standardized reporting of military expenditures, as well as providing accurate data and information to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. It also invited all States of the region to address, through various forms of cooperation, problems and threats posed to the region, such as terrorism, international crime and illicit arms transfers, as well as illicit drug production, consumption and trafficking, which jeopardized the friendly relations among States, hindered development of international cooperation and resulted in the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the democratic basis of pluralistic society.

2. In resolution 51/50, the General Assembly also encouraged the continued widespread support among the Mediterranean countries for the convening of a conference on security and cooperation in the Mediterranean as well as the ongoing consultations that would create the appropriate conditions for it. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on means to strengthen the security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

3. With a view to facilitating the preparation of such a report the Secretary-General addressed notes verbales to all Member States, requesting their views on the subject matter.

4. As at 6 October 1997, five Governments had replied and their responses are reproduced in section II below. Any replies or notifications received subsequently will be published as addenda to the present report.

II. Replies received from Governments

Algeria

[Original: French]
[8 September 1997]

1. Algeria fully supports the objectives and the actions envisaged by the General Assembly in its resolution 51/50 of 10 December 1997 concerning the strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

2. Algeria has always demonstrated an unwavering attachment to the Mediterranean and a constant commitment to the cause of bringing the Mediterranean countries closer together by creating a zone of stability and collective security and encouraging a space for development and shared prosperity. Against this background, Algeria has participated and has been deeply involved in all the region's own initiatives, in particular the implementation of the Barcelona process, the purpose of which is to establish a framework for a renewed partnership.

3. Following the Barcelona Conference in November 1995, which laid the bases for new relations between the two shores of the Mediterranean, the second Euro-Mediterranean conference, held at Valletta, facilitated the calm evolution of this process and gave a political impetus to the dynamics of the partnership.

4. The regional political context in which this conference took place confirmed once again the correctness of a global, balanced and multidimensional approach. As coordinator of the group of Arab Mediterranean States, Algeria made its contribution to the perpetuation of this process, which constitutes a fundamental political achievement.

5. For Algeria, the political and security partnership depends on a correlation between security and stability and the necessity of economic and social development. The selected approach is one of step-by-step progress and pragmatism in the implementation of confidence-building measures, an approach which takes due account of the evolution of the political and security situation in the region. These measures are intrinsically linked to the just and lasting resolution of conflicts, the peaceful settlement of disputes, concrete and effective measures of disarmament through the accession of all the States of the region to the multinational agreements on the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction (the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention, etc.), and to the placement of all nuclear installations under international control.

6. In addition, the political and security partnership should in Algeria's view be suffused by a common political will of the riparian States to present a united front to common challenges by complying with the principles of international law, in particular non-interference in the internal affairs of another State, non-use of force or threat of use of force, and respect for sovereignty. Any such cooperation can only help to strengthen democracy and consolidate the rule of law in the region, and to eliminate new kinds of threat to peace and security, in particular disruptive and transnational phenomena.

7. Terrorism is a universal phenomenon threatening the democratic foundations of States, and it demands a policy of prevention and sustained cooperation among all the

countries of the Mediterranean. The task therefore is to intensify and strengthen cooperation against terrorism, which remains a major challenge to be taken up by all the Euro-Mediterranean partners and by the international community.

8. Within the framework of the economic and financial partnership, Algeria has emphasized the need to reduce the development disparities between the two shores and to give particular priority, on the one hand, to a just and equitable distribution of the financial flows available to the Mediterranean partners and, on the other hand, to the need for debt relief and conversion. This clearly means introducing new economic relationships and promoting a partnership for co-development. In short, the free-trade area must not constitute an end in itself but a means of attaining the more ambitious goal of a zone of shared prosperity.

9. Where the social, cultural and human partnership is concerned, Algeria believes that the establishment of a free-trade area entails action to deal with the question of mobility of the human element, in particular by improving the conditions for travel between the two shores. Lifting the constraints on freedom of travel and settlement will facilitate improved exchanges between people and greater understanding among the coastal societies.

10. Algeria's contribution to the rapprochement of the peoples of the Mediterranean was given concrete form by the convening in Algiers on 11 and 12 July 1997 of the fourth regular session of the Mediterranean Forum. The Algiers meeting marked an important stage in the consolidation and invigoration of this important framework for dialogue and cooperation among Mediterranean countries. It also confirmed the usefulness of this framework and the commitment of all the member countries to the Forum.

Jordan

[Original: English]
[17 June 1997]

1. Jordan is totally committed to the achievement of the general aims of resolution 51/50 and fully embraces the lofty ideals embodied in it.

2. It is Jordan's view that paragraphs 7 and 8 of the resolution should reflect explicitly the real concerns that the international community has expressed vis-à-vis the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. These paragraphs, therefore, should include the explicit call upon all States of the Mediterranean region that have not yet adhered to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Conventions banning chemical and biological weapons, to do so, with a view to the ultimate goal of creating a Mediterranean region free from such weapons of mass destruction.

Lebanon

[Original: French and Arabic]
[4 June 1997]

1. With regard to paragraph 12 of resolution 51/50, in which the General Assembly requests the Secretary-General to submit a report on means to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region, attention is drawn to the final document of the Malta Conference on Euro-Mediterranean partnership, together with the letter with its annexes, of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lebanon, in which he expresses reservations regarding the paragraph concerning combating terrorism.

2. Lebanon endorses the addition of the issue of support for security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region and believes the resolution should include the following:

(a) A clear reference to the difficulties faced by the peace process in the Middle East as a result of the Israeli rejection of that process, which was based on the Madrid Conference and the principle of land for peace, and in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). The resolution should call for efforts to support the process on the above-mentioned bases;

(b) Paragraph 8 should include the submission of nuclear installations to international inspection;

(c) Paragraph 9 on strengthening cooperation in combating all forms of terrorism should include the words "because terrorism constitutes a violation of human rights and threatens peace, security and stability in the region and in the world". Moreover, Lebanon stresses the need to recognize the legitimate right of people living under foreign occupation, including their right to resist foreign occupation, which violates their human rights and in order to liberate the occupied national territory. Lebanon cannot overlook the fact that over 10 per cent of its national territory in southern Lebanon and the western Bequaa valley has been occupied by Israel since 1978, in defiance of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). The occupying forces and their proxies subject the civilian population to practices that are in violation of their human rights and in contravention of the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) and the Fourth Hague Convention (1907), aggravated by almost

daily attacks against the sovereign territory of Lebanon and the use of prohibited weapons against civilians. Furthermore, scores of Lebanese civilians are held in detention centres in the occupied parts of southern Lebanon and Israel under the most inhuman and insalubrious conditions. Lebanon therefore believes there is a need to define clearly in a resolution the difference between terrorism, which Lebanon condemns and is indeed a victim thereof, and the legitimate resistance against military targets of the occupying force in the occupied territory;

(d) A paragraph should be added calling for cooperation in areas of common interest between the United Nations and the Euro-Mediterranean partnership inaugurated at Barcelona in 1995.

Malta

[Original: English]
[6 August 1997]

1. As a co-sponsor of the original General Assembly resolution on the strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region and a principal sponsor of resolution 51/50, which was unanimously adopted by the General Assembly on 10 December 1996, Malta believes that the implementation of the provisions of the resolution will enhance efforts by Mediterranean countries to give the region a much needed respite from the tension, conflicts, upheavals and uncertainties that have engulfed the region for many centuries.

2. Up to a few years ago the Mediterranean Sea was still the potential battleground for East/West confrontation. It was here that the fate of Europe, and indeed that of the whole world, was put repeatedly through tremendous pressures, and where the lives and livelihoods of the peoples around the shores of the Mediterranean were ever at stake. Yet, notwithstanding the demise of the cold war syndrome, the Mediterranean today continues to be confronted with problems and new threats as well as with common and multiple challenges.

3. The Mediterranean region has its own particular and unique characteristics. It has been generally observed that the Mediterranean is more a region of contrasts than of similarities. The movement of people, the movement of faiths and the movement of ideas has always meant contact, often resulting in direct conflict, leaving no ground for achieving any appreciable degree of stability, development, peace and prosperity in the Mediterranean region.

4. In the midst of all these destabilizing factors, the new Labour Government of Malta, enjoying the confidence of the absolute majority of the Maltese people, as manifested in the general election of October 1996, has adopted a foreign policy that is dictated by Malta's particular geo-strategic position, by the political situation prevailing in the region as well as internationally, and by the pattern and orientation of commercial relations that Malta has developed throughout the years. This pragmatic approach results from the consideration that Malta's foreign policy incorporates all political activity which extends beyond its territorial limits and concerns, events and developments and which, though not restricted to established national borders, directly and indirectly influence the quality of life of the Maltese people.

5. With a view to promoting peace and strengthening security in the Mediterranean region, the new Government of Malta has time and time again committed itself to a foreign policy that is based on the values of democratic governance, on the upholding of fundamental human rights, on the peaceful settlement of disputes and on a policy that is in favour of disarmament and strongly opposes military aggression, and the manufacture, distribution and proliferation of all types of armaments and weapons, especially weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, chemical and biological.

6. The Government continues to believe that the policy of neutrality and non-alignment entrenched in Malta's Constitution since 1987, should continue to play a decisive and influential role in the formulation of Malta's foreign policy, an approach that will in itself afford Malta a certain degree of security and contribute towards security on a larger and wider scale in the whole Mediterranean region.

7. The Government of Malta is following a policy that fully acknowledges, respects and tolerates diverse religious beliefs and different cultures. It is a policy that opposes all forms of nationalism, as well as all forms of extremism, be they political, religious or otherwise. Malta is of the view that because of their special role in civil society, religious movements have an important role to play in today's ethical discussions on tolerance and peaceful coexistence. Historically, they have formed the moral and ethical foundation of many societies. Religious leaders have a vital role to play as partners in dialogue with politicians, amongst others, in their task of addressing the key issues of our times. Their cooperation with political institutions and civil societies is vital both on a national, regional and international level. They are key players in the search for viable models of tolerance, peaceful coexistence, cooperation and hence security. Though steeped in Christian

tradition, Malta also went through several centuries of Islamic presence. Malta is endowed, like no other part of the region, with a heritage that pledges its vocation and commitment to be at the service of the Mediterranean community.

8. Malta believes that the perceived threats to stability, and thus to security, in the Mediterranean are more than before of a non-military nature. Non-military threats to security could be political, environmental, economic or social in nature.

9. The widespread flow of armaments in the Mediterranean region remains for Malta a source of deep concern. Malta favours policies and measures that lead to disarmament and militate against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Malta is a State party to several major conventions and treaties relating to disarmament. The geopolitical realities of Malta make it sensitive to the fact that there are still countries in the Mediterranean region that have not yet adhered to a number of disarmament regimes including the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention. In the interest of security and stability in the Mediterranean, it is the Government of Malta's hope that all Mediterranean countries adhere to these and other disarmament conventions and treaties in the belief that through their implementation, a new aura of confidence and trust will emerge in the region.

10. In the coming years Malta's vocation will be geared to tackle the question of security in the Mediterranean by contributing towards greater cooperation and more understanding among and between all the countries in the region. Working on the concept of cooperative security, maximum use will be made of non-military mechanisms and structures, and less of military or defence structures. Preventive diplomacy, confidence-building measures, an open and transparent political dialogue and cooperation exchanges at the bilateral and multilateral levels in all possible spheres will constitute Malta's tools for its contribution in guaranteeing peace, stability and development in the Mediterranean region.

11. The ultimate objective of Malta's Mediterranean policy is the transformation of this region into a politically stable, and an economically prosperous, demilitarized, nuclear-free zone. The safeguarding of peace and the promotion of closer and sustained cooperation among Mediterranean countries should enable the enjoyment of complete sovereignty by all the peoples of the region, free and protected by established and accepted territorial borders and adhering to a mutual policy of non-interference and non-intervention in the internal affairs of each other.

12. Malta remains particularly concerned at the ever-widening demographic gap in the Mediterranean between the relatively affluent and ageing North and an economically disadvantaged and youthful South.

13. The glaring disparities in levels of the economic and social well-being between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean region are further exacerbated by what Malta has often described as "soft" security risks. These include ethnic conflicts and disputes arising out of the neglect of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities; border disputes that could lead to armed conflicts; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems; international terrorism; organized crime and illegal trafficking in arms and drugs; money-laundering, contraband and clandestine migration; and transnational environmental degradation.

14. This grave situation confronting the Mediterranean region requires an all-out effort by the Mediterranean countries themselves to intensify the process of dialogue and consultation with a view to resolving the problems existing in the region and to eliminating the causes of tension and the consequent threat to peace and security. To achieve these objectives the new Government of Malta will be pursuing the paths offered by all opportunities resulting from initiatives, above all by the Mediterranean countries themselves, that take into account both the European and the Mediterranean components of Malta's foreign policy.

15. Unfortunately, the promotion and implementation of new forms of cooperation in the Mediterranean region have often been stalemated because of both latent and overt North/South and East/West tensions. Consequently, it is the constant objective of the Government of Malta to promote a process of dialogue and cooperation in the region, both through unilateral action the Government can take, as well as through its encouragement of and, where appropriate, participation in projects and programmes of conflict resolution, confidence-building and practical cooperation. Regrettably, every serious attempt made so far towards a structured linkage and, it is hoped, towards dialogue on a more regular basis, has failed up to now, and there seems little hope of success in this respect in the foreseeable future.

16. If one were to give a cursory glance at the present scenario in the Mediterranean, one would note that the progress achieved during recent years in the Middle East peace process, while very encouraging, still presents the Mediterranean with a formidable challenge. Tension in the Mediterranean cannot be dispelled unless and until a permanent solution to the Middle East problem is found.

17. The devastation and the destruction, as well as the human tragedy resulting from years and years of unrelenting ethnic hatred, witnessed in the fragmented former Yugoslavia; the division of Cyprus; the sanctions imposed by the Security Council on the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, which continue to have far-reaching effects on neighbouring countries; the recent turmoil in Albania; and political instability in some countries because of rampant extremist fundamentalist elements, these are matters of great concern to all the littoral States of the Mediterranean.

18. In this context, the Government of Malta is therefore giving its foreign policy a European approach and a Mediterranean approach. Malta firmly believes that this twofold approach permeating around the potential cooperation and collaboration between and among all Mediterranean countries must recognize the indivisible character of security in the Mediterranean, thus promoting the economic and social development of all peoples of the region.

19. In defining its Euro-Mediterranean policy, the Government of Malta keeps this important consideration constantly in mind. This in turn permits the recognition of, on the one hand, the urgent need and potential that exists for the promotion of a comprehensive process of cooperation at both the strictly intra-Mediterranean, as well as the wider Euro-Mediterranean dimensions. On the other hand, it also demonstrates the constraints that accompany any such process of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.

20. In April 1997, the Second Ministerial Conference of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership was held in Malta. This event and its outcome provide a telling manifestation both of the challenges that are facing the Mediterranean and of the role that neutral Malta is playing in the region — a direct response to the very specific and unique geopolitical factors that currently exist in the surrounding region. Far from being ideologically motivated, Malta's policy of active neutrality therefore positions it adequately to execute the roles of a regional peace broker and/or interlocutor depending on the political realities that happen to manifest themselves at any particular time.

21. The unanimous decision to hold the Second Euro-Mediterranean Conference in Malta was therefore a logical and welcome one. In addition to offering the peaceful setting where cooperative dialogue could take place, the Conference also provided the Government of Malta with an opportunity to demonstrate the constructive contribution it can make towards nurturing greater cooperation between Europe and the Mediterranean countries.

22. Malta believes that the Euro-Mediterranean process is making a valid contribution towards resolving the problem of the ever-widening economic and social gap that for many years has been one of the destabilizing factors of the region. Malta feels that the European Union's initiative provides and offers new and innovative opportunities to reinforce the much needed cooperation and collaboration between and among all participating States.

23. At the Malta Euro-Mediterranean Conference, the Government of Malta proposed the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary partnership — a mechanism that would enable all participating countries regularly to discuss issues of common interest in anticipation of drawing up a programme of work and activities based on the principles spelled out in the Barcelona Declaration.

24. In promoting the idea of a parliamentary partnership — a council of the Mediterranean — Malta has always envisaged the creation of a permanent forum that would help develop and reinforce political cooperation between peoples with so many different languages, culture, religions and ideologies. Such a permanent parliamentary institution would serve as a forum where politicians would meet on a regular basis to discuss problems emanating in the region, evaluate the difficulties faced in the resolution of such problems, explore potentialities of cooperation that exist and map out common political objectives. In this context, Malta has offered its facilities to host such a Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary partnership, in the belief that Malta's geo-strategic position could serve as a meeting place for the active involvement of parliaments in this partnership process that would also assist in bringing the discussion closer to the Mediterranean peoples themselves.

25. Learning from past experience, a number of basic considerations would need to be identified if any process for Mediterranean dialogue is to be launched with success. One of these is the question of participation. In this regard, Malta is fully aware that, in any process of regional consultation, all countries in the Mediterranean region should be given the opportunity to participate on an equal basis and from the very outset. No less important to the issue of participation is that of content. It is necessary to circumscribe, at least at the initial stages, the content of a Mediterranean dialogue to more manageable subjects, some of which could be taken up at the subregional level.

26. Tackling such issues pragmatically not only has the intrinsic merit of any collective effort to seek solutions to very real and shared problems, but it contributes both directly and indirectly to an amelioration of the security situation — directly by reducing the areas where causes of

friction and suspicion could arise; indirectly by inducing those habits of trust and mutual comprehension that in themselves predispose those involved to venture into more intricate areas of cooperation.

27. It is in this spirit that the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Environment, Dr. George Vella, in his address to the XIIth Ministerial Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, meeting in New Delhi in April 1997, proposed the revival of the Group of Non-Aligned Mediterranean Countries. Malta believes that the Group could make a significant contribution towards the strengthening of peace, security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region and thus complement what is already taking place in other forums.

28. It is also in this spirit that ever since the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, the Government of Malta has continuously underscored the linkage that exists between security and stability in Europe and security and stability in the Mediterranean inasmuch as this forms an integral part of the notion of the indivisibility of security. The Maltese Government strongly believes in the role the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) could and can play in the future interests of peace and security in the Mediterranean, and therefore supports its activities and initiatives. Within OSCE, Malta together with the other participating States, has declared its intention of maintaining and amplifying the contacts and dialogue as initiated by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe with the non-participating States to include all the States of the Mediterranean, with the purpose of contributing to peace, reducing armed forces in the region, strengthening security, lessening tensions in the region and widening the scope of cooperation, ends in which all share a common interest, as well as with the purpose of defining further common objectives.

29. Leading up to the Lisbon Summit of OSCE and beyond, Malta kept stressing that the setting up of the informal open-ended contact group and the change in nomenclature to Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation would reflect the changing political focus in Europe and the shift of approach international security organizations were adopting in relation to the Mediterranean region. This new impetus on Mediterranean issues has been conducive to more substantial concrete work to be registered in the context of the Mediterranean dimension of the Common and Comprehensive Security Model for Europe for the Twenty-first Century. Malta reiterates its conviction that it would be in the interest of all participating States that the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation are given access and facilities to attend meetings of the Permanent Council of OSCE and the Forum for Security Cooperation.

30. Malta is also very active in the Committee of Ministers' Deputies of the Council of Europe's Ad Hoc Working Party on Cooperation in the Mediterranean Basin. Malta is also a member of the North/South Centre in Lisbon and has also advanced a number of proposals to strengthen Mediterranean cooperation, in particular, through the Council of Europe itself and the European Commission.

31. In spite of perceived difficulties, Malta also attaches great importance to the eventual convening of a conference on security and cooperation in the Mediterranean — a "CSCM". Malta believes that such a process should not be detached completely from the parent OSCE, but should rather be a "quasi-autonomous regional extension" of the same Organization. Such a process would project Europe towards the countries of the Mediterranean region so that it could treat the vast range of problems of the region with the same commitment with which OSCE has up to now addressed analogous problems in mainland Europe.

32. To complement these efforts and initiatives in these forums, as well as in others such as the Mediterranean Forum and the Mediterranean Action Plan, the new Government of Malta intends to make maximum use of its contacts and available diplomatic representation at the United Nations and other international forums to promote its political objective of the Mediterranean Sea as an area of peace and stability.

33. Malta strongly believes that the United Nations is still the principal world institution that offers all Member States a lasting, multilateral and action-oriented cooperative dialogue among States of the region. In this context, the Government of Malta feels that the United Nations system should be better utilized to increase and enhance a more active interchange and collaboration by Mediterranean countries with the Office of the Secretary-General. Malta therefore intends to keep the questions relating to the Mediterranean high on the international agenda, thus promoting a heightened awareness and greater interest in the issues that still beleaguer the Mediterranean region.

34. The Government of Malta feels that the United Nations should be more involved in monitoring the situation in the Mediterranean region and in promoting and strengthening economic, social, cultural and environmental cooperation in the region. As a point of departure, Malta would like to see that the Political Affairs Division of the United Nations dedicates more time and attention to the situation emanating in the Mediterranean region and coordinates all actions, measures and initiatives being undertaken in a number of fields by the United Nations system as a whole. In this

regard, the establishment of a Mediterranean Desk within the Division could perhaps facilitate contacts and assume a more direct role in the implementation of the provisions of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and decisions taken in other international and regional, if not subregional forums, where the Mediterranean dimension is the focal issue under consideration.

35. It is also the view of the Government of Malta that the annual report submitted for consideration to the First Committee of the General Assembly should include a summary of the activities of the various bodies, organizations and programmes that are being implemented in favour of Mediterranean countries.

36. Malta, through its new Government, has solemnly committed itself to the creation of a more favourable climate and to the relaxation of tensions that continue to aggravate the situation in *mare nostrum*. Malta, which for many centuries has itself been the witness to and involved in acts of war and strife in endless warfare and bloodshed emanating from the Mediterranean region, has dedicated itself to contributing to the transformation of the Mediterranean into a region of stability, security and cooperation.

37. Malta would also welcome a broader role for the United Nations Information Centre in Rome through a greater emphasis on issues relevant to the countries in the Mediterranean region, as well as through a wider dissemination of information about United Nations/Mediterranean activities.

38. Malta is eager to pursue all available avenues and all concerted approaches leading to its declared objectives of peace, stability and prosperity in the Mediterranean. As it has done in the past, Malta will not be found lacking in drive, in initiative or in its commitment in this policy objective, which will ensure a better future for our societies.

Russian Federation

[Original: Russian]
[10 June 1997]

1. The Russian Federation regards the strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean as one of the priority tasks of the international community.

2. The situation in the Mediterranean is characterized by the presence of diverse and contradictory factors. The region remains an area of increased political instability. The gap in socio-economic development between the countries of the south and north of the region is widening, there remains in the area a critical mass of "combustible material" — the Middle East conflict and the as yet unsettled Cyprus problem, and there is a high level of saturation with weapons, accompanied by the danger of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. A new generation of challenges is becoming ever more acutely felt — religious extremism, terrorism, narcotics trafficking, unlawful migration. The situation in the Mediterranean is negatively affected, in view of its geographical interconnectedness, by the domestic conflicts in a number of Balkan countries and hotbeds of inter-ethnic contradictions in the Black Sea basin.

3. At the same time, positive trends are also apparent in the Mediterranean: in particular in the context of what is known as the "Euro-Mediterranean process", a foundation has been laid for multilateral dialogue on an ongoing basis, and new mechanisms for cooperation in the economic, humanitarian and other spheres have emerged.

4. The Russian Federation consistently advocates a strengthening of the constructive role of the United Nations in resolving the political, economic and environmental problems of the region and in instituting productive cooperation among the Mediterranean States. The strengthening of security in the region calls for a comprehensive approach that includes parallel steps to settle conflict situations and eliminate hotbeds of tension, reduce the level of armed presence, strengthen confidence among the Mediterranean States themselves and their mutual understanding with other members of the international community, and develop economic cooperation in the region and with "third countries".

5. The total range of problems in the region, many of which extend across boundaries, can be resolved only by intensifying the efforts of all the contiguous States bordering the Mediterranean, whose national interests are directly affected by Mediterranean factors. This could be enhanced by a more substantial involvement of the United Nations in the regional aspects of cooperation.

6. Broader forward-looking approaches are also called for, in particular the development of common political principles for support by the United Nations for regional mechanisms for ensuring peace and security.

7. An increased role of the United Nations is also called for in ensuring mutual complementarity of economic interests and in encouraging practical cooperation of the Mediterranean countries with adjacent regions, in particular with the States of the Black Sea basin. If effect could be given to the concept of the "greater Mediterranean", based on a system of multifaceted cooperation among the States of the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins, and also of the

Middle East, that would open the way to the transformation of the region into a zone of peace, stability and cooperation.

8. An important role in instituting economic cooperation among the States of the Black Sea and Mediterranean basins could be played by the Economic Commission for Europe.

9. The establishment of cooperation on economic and environmental projects in the context of Black Sea economic cooperation and the Euro-Mediterranean (Euromed) programme of the European Union would open up extensive possibilities.

10. A considerable contribution to strengthening security in the Mediterranean could be made by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which has accumulated sound experience in drawing up and implementing joint steps by participating countries to strengthen security and cooperation in the military-political, economic, humanitarian and other spheres that could also be drawn on for resolving Mediterranean problems.

11. Nor has the idea of convening a conference on security and cooperation in the Mediterranean, which would make it possible to take a close look at the region's problems, and indicate specific ways of resolving them, drawing on the resources and capabilities of a broad range of States interested in the crisis-free development of the Mediterranean, lost its topicality.